

A Christmas Carol: Scrooge and Marley

from *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens

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GUIDE FOR READING

A Christmas Carol: Scrooge and Marley, Act I



Charles Dickens (1812–1870) was born in Portsmouth, England. He took upon himself the support of his family when he was twelve years old. For the rest of his life, he remembered what it was like to be poor. His sympathy for his fellow human beings is powerfully expressed in his story "A Christmas Carol." **Israel Horovitz** (1939–) has great respect for Dickens and this story. He has written, "I come to this work humbly, under the pressures of great respect for the Master: Charles Dickens."

Plot and Exposition

The **plot** of a play usually begins by introducing a conflict. The conflict rises to a climax, or high point of excitement or emotion. Then, as the play comes to a close, the excitement dies down, any unanswered questions about the story are answered, and the curtain falls.

Exposition is the revealing (exposing) of information needed to understand the action shown on stage. It often explains events that occurred before the start of the onstage events.

Look For

This play tells the story of a man who comes to learn sympathy for his fellow human beings. As you read Act I, notice how the plot develops in a way that makes you wonder what will happen to Scrooge. Also, notice the information given about events that occurred before Christmas 1843. How do these past events affect Scrooge?

Writing

Scrooge has become part of our everyday vocabulary. Brainstorm to list all the ideas that come to mind when you hear the word *Scrooge*.

Vocabulary

Knowing the following words will help you as you read *A Christmas Carol: Scrooge and Marley*.

implored (im plôrd') *v.*: Asked or begged earnestly (p. 265)

morose (mə rōs') *adj.*: Gloomy, ill-tempered (p. 266)

destitute (des' tə tōōt') *adj.*: Living in complete poverty (p. 268)

misanthrope (mis' ən thrōp') *n.*: A person who hates or distrusts everyone (p. 270)

void (void) *n.*: Total emptiness (p. 270)

ponderous (pän' dər əs) *adj.*: Very heavy, bulky (p. 272)

THE PEOPLE OF THE PLAY

Jacob Marley, a specter
Ebenezer Scrooge, not yet
dead, which is to say still alive
Bob Cratchit, Scrooge's clerk
Fred, Scrooge's nephew
Thin Do-Gooder
Portly Do-Gooder
Specters (Various), carrying money-
boxes
The Ghost of Christmas Past
Four Jocund Travelers
A Band of Singers
A Band of Dancers
Little Boy Scrooge
Young Man Scrooge
Fan, Scrooge's little sister
The Schoolmaster
Schoolmates
Fezziwig, a fine and fair employer
Dick, young Scrooge's co-worker
Young Scrooge
A Fiddler
More Dancers
Scrooge's Lost Love
Scrooge's Lost Love's Daughter
Scrooge's Lost Love's Husband

**The Ghost of Christmas
Present**
Some Bakers
Mrs. Cratchit, Bob Cratchit's wife
Belinda Cratchit, a daughter
Martha Cratchit, another
daughter
Peter Cratchit, a son
Tiny Tim Cratchit, another son
Scrooge's Niece, Fred's wife
**The Ghost of Christmas Fu-
ture**, a mute Phantom
Three Men of Business
Drunks, Scoundrels,
Women of the Streets
A Charwoman
Mrs. Dilber
Joe, an old second-hand goods
dealer
A Corpse, very like Scrooge
An Indebted Family
Adam, a young boy
A Poulterer
A Gentlewoman
Some More Men of Business

THE PLACE OF THE PLAY

Various locations in and around the City of London, including Scrooge's Chambers and Offices; the Cratchit Home; Fred's Home; Scrooge's School; Fezziwig's Offices; Old Joe's Hide-a-Way.

THE TIME OF THE PLAY

The entire action of the play takes place on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and the morning after Christmas, 1843.

ACT I

Scene 1

[Ghostly music in auditorium. A single spotlight on JACOB MARLEY, D.C. He is ancient; awful, dead-eyed. He speaks straight out to auditorium.]

MARLEY. *[Cackle-voiced]* My name is Jacob Marley and I am dead. *[He laughs.]* Oh, no, there's no doubt that I am dead. The register of my burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker . . . and by my chief mourner . . . Ebenezer Scrooge . . . *[Pause; remembers]* I am dead as a door-nail.

[A spotlight fades up, Stage Right, on SCROOGE, in his counting-house,¹ counting. Lettering on the window behind SCROOGE reads: "SCROOGE AND MARLEY, LTD." The spotlight is tight on SCROOGE's head and shoulders. We shall not yet see into the offices and setting. Ghostly music continues, under. MARLEY looks across at SCROOGE: pitifully. After a moment's pause]

I present him to you: Ebenezer Scrooge . . . England's most tightfisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrench-

ing, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner! secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. The cold within him freezes his old features, nips his pointed nose, shrivels his cheek, stiffens his gait; makes his eyes red, his thin lips blue; and speaks out shrewdly in his grating voice. Look at him. Look at him . . .

[SCROOGE counts and mumbles.]

SCROOGE. They owe me money and I will collect. I will have them jailed, if I have to. They owe me money and I will collect what is due me.

[MARLEY moves towards SCROOGE: two steps. The spotlight stays with him.]

MARLEY. *[Disgusted]* He and I were partners for I don't know how many years. Scrooge was my sole executor, my sole administrator, my sole assign, my sole residuary legatee,² my sole friend and my sole mourner. But Scrooge was not so cut up by the sad event of my death, but that he was an excellent man of business on the very day of my funeral, and solemnized³ it with an undoubted

bargain. *[Pauses again in disgust]* He never painted out my name from the window. There it stands, on the window and above the warehouse door: Scrooge and Marley. Sometimes people new to our business call him Scrooge and sometimes they call him Marley. He answers to both names. It's all the same to him. And it's cheaper than painting in a new sign, isn't it? *[Pauses: moves closer to SCROOGE]* Nobody has ever stopped him in the street to say, with glad-some looks, "My dear Scrooge, how are you? When will you come to see me?" No beggars implored him to bestow a trifle, no children ever ask him what it is o'clock, no man or woman now, or ever in his life, not once, inquire the way to such and such a place. *[MARLEY stands next to SCROOGE now. They share, so it seems, a spotlight.]* But what

does Scrooge care of any of this? It is the very thing he likes! To edge his way along the crowded paths of life, warning all human sympathy to keep its distance.

[A ghostly bell rings in the distance. MARLEY moves away from SCROOGE, now, heading D. again. As he does, he "takes" the light: SCROOGE has disappeared into the black void beyond. MARLEY walks D.C., talking directly to the audience. Pauses]

The bell tolls and I must take my leave. You must stay a while with Scrooge and watch him play out his scroogey life. It is now the story: the once-upon-a-time. Scrooge is busy in his counting-house. Where else? Christmas eve and Scrooge is busy in his counting-house. It is cold, bleak, biting weather outside: foggy withal: and, if you listen closely,

you can hear the people in the court go wheezing up and down, beating their hands upon their breasts, and stamping their feet upon the pavement stones to warm them . . .

[The clocks outside strike three.]

Only three! and quite dark outside already: it has not been light all day this day.

[This ghostly bell rings in the distance again. MARLEY looks about him. Music in. MARLEY flies away.] (N.B. Marley's comings and goings should, from time to time, induce the explosion of the odd flash-pot. I.H.)

Scene 2

[Christmas music in, sung by a live chorus, full. At conclusion of song, sound fades under and into the distance. Lights up in set: offices of Scrooge and Marley, Ltd. SCROOGE sits at his desk, at work. Near him is a tiny fire. His door is open and in his line of vision, we see SCROOGE's clerk, BOB CRATCHIT, who sits in a dismal tank of a cubicle, copying letters. Near CRATCHIT is a fire so tiny as to barely cast a light: perhaps it is one pitifully glowing coal? CRATCHIT rubs his hands together, puts on a white comforter⁴ and tries to heat his hands around his candle. SCROOGE'S NEPHEW enters, unseen.]

SCROOGE. What are you doing, Cratchit? Acting cold, are you? Next, you'll be asking to replenish your coal from my coal-box, won't you? Well, save your breath, Cratchit! Unless you're prepared to find employ elsewhere!

NEPHEW. *[Cheerfully; surprising SCROOGE]* A merry Christmas to you, Uncle! God save you!

SCROOGE. Bah! Humbug!⁵

4. **comforter** (kum' fər tər) *n.*: A long, woolen scarf.

5. **Humbug** (hum' bug') *interj.*: Nonsense! (can also be used as a noun to mean nonsense or something done to cheat or deceive).

NEPHEW. Christmas a "humbug," Uncle? I'm sure you don't mean that.

SCROOGE. I do! Merry Christmas? What right do you have to be merry? What reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough!

NEPHEW. Come, then. What right have you to be dismal? What reason have you to be morose? You're rich enough.

SCROOGE. Bah! Humbug!

NEPHEW. Don't be cross, Uncle.

SCROOGE. What else can I be? Eh? When I live in a world of fools such as this? Merry Christmas? What's Christmastime to you but a time of paying bills without any money; a time for finding yourself a year older, but not an hour richer. If I could work my will, every idiot who goes about with "Merry Christmas" on his lips, should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart. He should!

NEPHEW. Uncle!

SCROOGE. Nephew! You keep Christmas in your own way and let me keep it in mine.

NEPHEW. Keep it! But you don't keep it, Uncle.

SCROOGE. Let me leave it alone, then. Much good it has ever done you!

NEPHEW. There are many things from which I have derived good, by which I have not profited, I daresay. Christmas among the rest. But I am sure that I always thought of Christmas time, when it has come round—as a good time: the only time I know of, when men and women seem to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys. And therefore, Uncle, though it has never put a

scrap of gold or silver in my pocket. I believe that it *has* done me good, and that it *will* do me good: and I say, God bless it!

[The CLERK in the tank applauds, looks at the furious SCROOGE and pokes out his tiny fire, as if in exchange for the moment of impropriety. SCROOGE yells at him.]

SCROOGE. [To the CLERK] Let me hear another sound from you and you'll keep your Christmas by losing your situation. [To the NEPHEW] You're quite a powerful speaker, sir. I wonder you don't go into Parliament.⁶

NEPHEW. Don't be angry, Uncle. Come! Dine with us tomorrow.

SCROOGE. I'd rather see myself dead than see myself with your family!

NEPHEW. But, why? Why?

SCROOGE. Why did you get married?

NEPHEW. Because I fell in love.

SCROOGE. That, sir, is the only thing that you have said to me in your entire lifetime which is even more ridiculous than "Merry Christmas"! [Turns from NEPHEW] Good afternoon.

NEPHEW. Nay, Uncle, you never came to see me before I married either. Why give it as a reason for not coming now?

SCROOGE. Good afternoon, Nephew!

NEPHEW. I want nothing from you: I ask nothing of you: why cannot we be friends?

SCROOGE. Good afternoon!

NEPHEW. I am sorry with all my heart, to find you so resolute. But I have made the trial in homage to Christmas, and I'll keep my

Christmas humor to the last. So A Merry Christmas, Uncle!

SCROOGE. Good afternoon!

NEPHEW. And A Happy New Year!

SCROOGE. Good afternoon!

NEPHEW. [He stands facing SCROOGE.] Uncle, you are the most . . . [Pauses] No, I shan't. My Christmas humor is intact . . . [Pause] God bless you, Uncle . . . [NEPHEW turns and starts for the door; he stops at CRATCHIT's cage.] Merry Christmas, Bob Cratchit . . .

CRATCHIT. Merry Christmas to you sir, and a very, very happy New Year . . .

SCROOGE. [Calling across to them] Oh, fine, a perfection, just fine . . . to see the perfect pair of you: husbands, with wives and children to support . . . my clerk there earning fifteen shillings a week . . . and the perfect pair of you, talking about a Merry Christmas! [Pauses] I'll retire to Bedlam!⁷

NEPHEW. [To CRATCHIT] He's impossible!

CRATCHIT. Oh, mind him not, sir. He's getting on in years, and he's alone. He's noticed your visit. I'll wager your visit has warmed him.

NEPHEW. Him? Uncle Ebenezer Scrooge? Warmed? You are a better Christian than I am, sir.

CRATCHIT. [Opening the door for NEPHEW; two DO-GOODERS will enter, as NEPHEW exits] Good day to you, sir, and God bless.

NEPHEW. God bless . . . [One man who enters is portly, the other is thin. Both are pleasant.]

CRATCHIT. Can I help you, gentlemen?

6. Parliament (pär' lə mənt): The national legislative body of Great Britain, in some ways like the American Congress.

7. Bedlam (bed' ləm): A hospital in London for the mentally ill.

THIN MAN. *[Carrying papers and books; looks around CRATCHIT to SCROOGE]* Scrooge and Marley's, I believe. Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge, or Mr. Marley?

SCROOGE. Mr. Marley has been dead these seven years. He died seven years ago this very night.

PORTLY MAN. We have no doubt his liberality is well represented by his surviving partner . . . *[Offers his calling card]*

SCROOGE. *[Handing back the card: unlooked at]* . . . Good afternoon.

THIN MAN. This will take but a moment, sir . . .

PORTLY MAN. At this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge, it is more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the poor and destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time. Many thousands are in want of common necessities; hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, sir.

SCROOGE. Are there no prisons?

PORTLY MAN. Plenty of prisons.

SCROOGE. And aren't the Union workhouses still in operation?

THIN MAN. They are. Still. I wish that I could say that they are not.

SCROOGE. The Treadmill⁸ and the Poor Law⁹ are in full vigor, then?

THIN MAN. Both very busy, sir.

8. the Treadmill (tred' mil'): A kind of mill wheel turned by the weight of persons treading steps arranged around it; this device was used to punish prisoners in jails.

9. the Poor Law: A series of laws were passed in England from the 17th century on to help the poor; changes to the law in 1834 gave responsibility for this relief to the national government but did not provide much aid for the poor.

SCROOGE. Ohhh, I see. I was afraid, from what you said at first, that something had occurred to stop them from their useful course. *[Pauses]* I'm glad to hear it.

PORTLY MAN. Under the impression that they scarcely furnish Christian cheer of mind or body to the multitude, a few of us are endeavoring to raise a fund to buy the Poor some meat and drink, and means of warmth. We choose this time, because it is a time, of all others, when Want is keenly felt, and Abundance rejoices. *[Pen in hand; as well as notepad]* What shall I put you down for, sir?

SCROOGE. Nothing!

PORTLY MAN. You wish to be left anonymous?

SCROOGE. I wish to be left alone! *[Pauses; turns away; turns back to them]* Since you ask me what I wish, gentlemen, that is my answer. I help to support the establishments that I have mentioned—they cost enough; and those who are badly off—must go there.

THIN MAN. Many can't go there; and many would rather die.

SCROOGE. If they would rather die, they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population. Besides—excuse me—I don't know that.

THIN MAN. But you might know it!

SCROOGE. It's not my business. It's enough for a man to understand his own business, and not to interfere with other people's. Mine occupies me constantly. Good afternoon, gentlemen! *[Scrooge turns his back on the gentlemen and returns to his desk.]*

PORTLY MAN. But, sir, Mr. Scrooge . . . think of the poor.

SCROOGE. *[Turns suddenly to them. Pauses]*
Take your leave of my offices, sirs, while I am still smiling.

[The THIN MAN looks at the PORTLY MAN. They are undone. They shrug. They move to door. Cratchit hops up to open it for them.]

THIN MAN. Good day, sir . . . *[To CRATCHIT]* A merry Christmas to you, sir . . .

CRATCHIT. Yes. A Merry Christmas to both of you . . .

PORTLY MAN. Merry Christmas . . .

[CRATCHIT silently squeezes something into the hand of the THIN MAN.]

THIN MAN. What's this?

CRATCHIT. Shhhh . . .

[CRATCHIT opens the door; wind and snow whistle into the room.]

THIN MAN. Thank you, sir, thank you.

[CRATCHIT closes the door and returns to his workplace. SCROOGE is at his own counting table. He talks to CRATCHIT without looking up.]

SCROOGE. It's less of a time of year for being merry, and more a time of year for being loony . . . if you ask me.

CRATCHIT. Well, I don't know, sir . . .

[The clock's bell strikes six o'clock.]

Well, there it is, eh, six?

SCROOGE. Saved by six bells, are you?

CRATCHIT. I must be going home . . . *[He snuffs out his candle and puts on his hat.]*
I hope you have a . . . very very lovely day tomorrow, sir . . .

SCROOGE. Hmmm. Oh, you'll be wanting the whole day tomorrow, I suppose?

CRATCHIT. If quite convenient, sir.

SCROOGE. It's not convenient, and it's not fair. If I was to stop half-a-crown for it, you'd think yourself ill-used. I'll be bound?

[CRATCHIT smiles faintly.]

CRATCHIT. I don't know, sir . . .

SCROOGE. And yet, you don't think me ill-used, when I pay a day's wages for no work . . .

CRATCHIT. It's only but once a year . . .

SCROOGE. A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every 25th of December! But I suppose you must have the whole day. Be here all the earlier the next morning!

CRATCHIT. Oh, I will, sir. I will. I promise you. And, sir . . .

SCROOGE. Don't say it, Cratchit.

CRATCHIT. But let me wish you a . . .

SCROOGE. Don't say it, Cratchit. I warn you . . .

CRATCHIT. Sir!

SCROOGE. Cratchit!

[CRATCHIT opens the door.]

CRATCHIT. All right, then, sir . . . well . . .
[Suddenly] Merry Christmas, Mr. Scrooge!

[And he runs out the door, shutting same behind him. SCROOGE moves to his desk; gathering his coat, hat, etc. A BOY appears at his window. . . .]

BOY. *[Singing]* "Away in a manger . . ."

[SCROOGE seizes his ruler and whacks at the image of the boy outside. The boy leaves.]

SCROOGE. Bah! Humbug! Christmas! Bah! Humbug! *[He shuts out the light.]*

A note on the crossover, following Scene 2:

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[SCROOGE will walk alone to his rooms from his offices. As he makes a long slow cross of the stage, the scenery should change. Christmas music will be heard, various people will cross by SCROOGE, often smiling happily.]

There will be occasional pleasant greetings tossed at him.

SCROOGE, in contrast to all, will grump and mumble. He will snap at passing boys, as might a horrid old hound.

In short, SCROOGE's sounds and movements will define him in contrast from all other people who cross the stage: he is the misanthrope, the malcontent, the miser. He is SCROOGE.

This statement of SCROOGE's character, by contrast to all other characters, should seem comical to the audience.

During SCROOGE's crossover to his rooms, snow should begin to fall. All passers-by will hold their faces to the sky, smiling, allowing snow to shower them lightly. SCROOGE, by contrast, will bat at the flakes with his walking-stick, as might an insomniac swat at a sleep-stopping, middle-of-the-night swarm of mosquitoes. He will comment on the blackness of the night, and, finally, reach his rooms and his encounter with the magical specter: MARLEY, his eternal mate.]

Scene 3

SCROOGE. No light at all . . . no moon . . . that is what is at the center of a Christmas Eve: dead black: void . . .

[SCROOGE puts his key in the door's keyhole. He has reached his rooms now. The door knocker changes and is now MARLEY's face. A musical sound; quickly; ghostly. MARLEY's image is not at all angry, but looks at SCROOGE as did the old MARLEY look at SCROOGE. The hair is curiously stirred; eyes

wide open, dead: absent of focus. SCROOGE stares wordlessly here. The face, before his very eyes, does *deliquesce*.¹⁰ It is a knocker again. SCROOGE opens the door and checks the back of same, probably for MARLEY's pigtail. Seeing nothing but screws and nuts, SCROOGE refuses the memory.]

Pooh, pooh!

[The sound of the door closing resounds throughout the house as thunder. Every room echoes the sound. SCROOGE fastens the door and walks across the hall to the stairs, trimming his candle as he goes; and then he goes slowly up the staircase. He checks each room: sitting room, bedroom, lumber-room. He looks under the sofa, under the table: nobody there. He fixes his evening gruel on the hob,¹¹ changes his jacket. SCROOGE sits near the tiny low-flamed fire, sipping his gruel. There are various pictures on the walls: all of them now show likenesses of MARLEY. SCROOGE blinks his eyes.]

Bah! Humbug!

[SCROOGE walks in a circle about the room. The pictures change back into their natural images. He sits down at the table in front of the fire. A bell hangs overhead. It begins to ring, of its own accord. Slowly, surely, begins the ringing of every bell in the house. They continue ringing for nearly half a minute. SCROOGE is stunned by the phenomenon. The bells cease their ringing all at once. Deep below SCROOGE, in the basement of the house, there is the sound of clanking, of some enormous chain being dragged across the floors; and now up the stairs. We hear doors flying open.]

10. deliquesce (del' ə kwes') v.: Melt away.

11. gruel (grōō' əl) **on the hob** (hăb): A thin broth warming on a ledge at the back or side of the fireplace.

Bah still! Humbug still! This is not happening! I won't believe it!

[MARLEY'S GHOST enters the room. He is horrible to look at: pigtail, vest, suit as usual, but he drags an enormous chain now, to which is fastened cash-boxes, keys, padlocks, ledgers, deeds, and heavy purses fashioned of steel. He is transparent. MARLEY stands opposite the stricken SCROOGE.]

How now! What do you want of me?

MARLEY. Much!

SCROOGE. Who are you?

MARLEY. Ask me who I was.

SCROOGE. Who were you then?

MARLEY. In life, I was your business partner: Jacob Marley.

SCROOGE. I see . . . can you sit down?

MARLEY. I can.

SCROOGE. Do it then.

MARLEY. I shall. [MARLEY sits opposite SCROOGE, in the chair across the table, at the front of the fireplace.] You don't believe in me.

SCROOGE. I don't.

MARLEY. Why do you doubt your senses?

SCROOGE. Because every little thing affects them. A slight disorder of the stomach makes them cheat. You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. There's more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are!

[There is a silence between them. SCROOGE is made nervous by it. He picks up a toothpick.]

Humbug! I tell you: humbug!

[MARLEY opens his mouth and screams a ghostly, fearful scream. The scream echoes about each room of the house. Bats fly, cats screech, lightning flashes. SCROOGE stands and walks backwards against the wall. MARLEY stands and screams again. This time, he takes his head and lifts it from his shoulders. His head continues to scream. MARLEY's face again appears on every picture in the room: all screaming. SCROOGE, on his knees before MARLEY.]

Mercy! Dreadful apparition,¹² mercy! Why, O! why do you trouble me so?

MARLEY. Man of the worldly mind, do you believe in me, or not?

SCROOGE. I do. I must. But why do spirits such as you walk the earth? And why do they come to me?

MARLEY. It is required of every man that the spirit within him should walk abroad among his fellow-men, and travel far and wide; and if that spirit goes not forth in life, it is condemned to do so after death. [MARLEY screams again; a tragic scream: from his ghostly bones.] I wear the chain I forged in life. I made it link by link, and yard by yard. Is its pattern strange to you? Or would you know, you, Scrooge, the weight and length of the strong coil you bear yourself? It was full as heavy and long as this, seven Christmas Eves ago. You have labored on it, since. It is a ponderous chain.

[Terrified that a chain will appear about his body, SCROOGE spins and waves the unwanted chain away. None, of course, appears. Sees MARLEY watching him dance about the room. MARLEY watches SCROOGE: silently.]

SCROOGE. Jacob. Old Jacob Marley, tell me more. Speak comfort to me, Jacob . . .

12. apparition (ap' ə rish' ən) *n.*: Ghost.

MARLEY. I have none to give. Comfort comes from other regions, Ebenezer Scrooge, and is conveyed by other ministers, to other kinds of men. A very little more, is all that is permitted to me. I cannot rest, I cannot stay, I cannot linger anywhere . . . [*He moans again.*] my spirit never walked beyond our counting-house—mark me!—in life my spirit never roved beyond the narrow limits of our money-changing hole; and weary journeys lie before me!

SCROOGE. But you were always a good man of business, Jacob.

MARLEY. [*Screams word "business": a flashpot explodes with him.*] **BUSINESS!!!** Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, benevolence, were, all, my business. [*SCROOGE is quaking.*] Hear me, Ebenezer Scrooge! My time is nearly gone.

SCROOGE. I will, but don't be hard upon me. And don't be flowery, Jacob! Pray!

MARLEY. How is it that I appear before you in a shape that you can see, I may not tell. I have sat invisible beside you many and many a day. That is no light part of my penance. I am here tonight to warn you that you have yet a chance and hope of escaping my fate. A chance and hope of my procuring, Ebenezer.

SCROOGE. You were always a good friend to me. Thank'ee!

MARLEY. You will be haunted by Three Spirits.

SCROOGE. Would that be the chance and hope you mentioned, Jacob?

MARLEY. It is.

SCROOGE. I think I'd rather not.

MARLEY. Without their visits, you cannot hope to shun the path I tread. Expect the first one tomorrow, when the bell tolls one.

SCROOGE. Couldn't I take 'em all at once, and get it over, Jacob?

MARLEY. Expect the second on the next night at the same hour. The third upon the next night when the last stroke of twelve has ceased to vibrate. Look to see me no more. Others may, but you may not. And look that, for your own sake, you remember what has passed between us!

[*MARLEY places his head back upon his shoulders. He approaches the window and beckons to SCROOGE to watch. Outside the window, specters¹³ fly by, carrying money-boxes and chains. They make a confused sound of lamentation. MARLEY, after listening a moment, joins into their mournful dirge. He leans to the window and floats out into the bleak, dark night. He is gone.*]

SCROOGE. [*Rushing to the window*] Jacob! No, Jacob! Don't leave me! I'm frightened!

[*He sees that MARLEY has gone. He looks outside. He pulls the shutter closed, so that the scene is blocked from his view. All sound stops. After a pause, he re-opens the shutter and all is quiet, as it should be on Christmas Eve. Carolers carol out of doors, in the distance. SCROOGE closes the shutter and walks down the stairs. He examines the door by which MARLEY first entered.*]

No one here at all! Did I imagine all that? Humbug! [*He looks about the room.*] I did imagine it. It only happened in my foulest dream-mind, didn't it? An undigested bit of . . .

[*Thunder and lightning in the room: suddenly*]

Sorry! Sorry!

[*There is silence again. The lights fade out.*]

13. **specters** (spek' tərz) *n.*: Ghosts.

Scene 4

[Christmas music, choral, "Hark the Herald Angels Sing," sung by an onstage choir of children, spotlighted. D.C. Above. SCROOGE in his bed, dead to the world, asleep, in his darkened room. It should appear that the choir is singing somewhere outside of the house, of course, and a use of scrim¹⁴ is thus suggested. When the singing is ended, the choir should fade out of view and MARLEY should fade into view, in their place.]

MARLEY. [Directly to audience] From this point forth . . . I shall be quite visible to you, but invisible to him. [Smiles] He will feel my presence, nevertheless, for, unless my senses fail me completely, we are—you and I—witness to the changing of a miser: that one, my partner in life, in business, and in eternity: that one: Scrooge. [Moves to staircase, below SCROOGE] See him now. He endeavors to pierce the darkness with his ferret eyes.¹⁵ [To audience] See him, now. He listens for the hour.

[The bells toll. SCROOGE is awakened and quakes as the hour approaches one o'clock, but the bells stop their sound at the hour of twelve.]

SCROOGE. [Astonished] Midnight! Why this isn't possible. It was past two when I went to bed. An icicle must have gotten into the clock's works! I couldn't have slept through the whole day and far into another night. It isn't possible that anything has happened to the sun, and this is twelve at noon! [He runs to window; unshutters same; it is night.] Night, still. Quiet, normal for the season, cold. It is certainly not noon. I cannot in any way afford to lose my days. Securities come

due, promissory notes,¹⁶ interest on investments: these are things that happen in the daylight! [He returns to his bed.] Was this a dream?

[MARLEY appears in his room. He speaks to the audience.]

MARLEY. You see? He does not, with faith, believe in me fully, even still! Whatever will it take to turn the faith of a miser from money to men?

SCROOGE. Another quarter and it'll be one and Marley's ghostly friends will come. [Pauses; listens] Where's the chime for one? [Ding, dong] A quarter past [Repeats] Half-past! [Repeats] A quarter to it! But where's the heavy bell of the hour one? This is a game in which I lose my senses! Perhaps, if I allowed myself another short doze . . .

MARLEY. . . . Doze, Ebenezer, doze.

[A heavy bell thuds its one ring; dull and definitely one o'clock. There is a flash of light. SCROOGE sits up, in a sudden. A hand draws back the curtains by his bed. He sees it.]

SCROOGE. A hand! Who owns it! Hello!

[Ghostly music again, but of a new nature to the play. A strange figure stands before SCROOGE—like a child, yet at the same time like an old man: white hair, but unwrinkled skin, long, muscular arms, but delicate legs and feet. Wears white tunic; lustrous belt cinches waist. Branch of fresh green holly in its hand, but has its dress trimmed with fresh summer flowers. Clear jets of light spring from the crown of its head. Holds cap in hand. The Spirit is called PAST.]

Are you the Spirit, sir, whose coming was foretold to me?

14. **scrim** (skrim) n.: A light, semi-transparent curtain.

15. **ferret eyes:** A ferret is a small, weasel-like animal used for hunting rabbits; this expression means to look persistently, the way a ferret hunts.

16. **promissory** (prəm' i sôr' ē) **notes:** Written promises to pay someone a certain sum of money.

PAST. I am.

MARLEY. Does he take this to be a vision of his green grocer?

SCROOGE. Who, and what are you?

PAST. I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.

SCROOGE. Long past?

PAST. Your past.

SCROOGE. May I ask, please, sir, what business you have here with me?

PAST. Your welfare.

SCROOGE. Not to sound ungrateful, sir, and really, please do understand that I am plenty obliged for your concern, but, really, kind spirit, it would have done all the better for my welfare to have been left alone altogether, to have slept peacefully through this night.

PAST. Your reclamation, then. Take heed!

SCROOGE. My what?

PAST. *[Motioning to SCROOGE and taking his arm] Rise! Fly with me! [He leads SCROOGE to the window.]*

SCROOGE. *[Panicked] Fly, but I am a mortal and cannot fly!*

PAST. *[Pointing to his heart] Bear but a touch of my hand here and you shall be upheld in more than this!*

[SCROOGE touches the SPIRIT's heart and the lights dissolve into sparkly flickers. Lovely crystals of music are heard. The scene dissolves into another. Christmas music again]

Scene 5

[SCROOGE and the GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST walk together across an open stage. In the background, we see a field that is open: covered by a soft, downy snow; a country road.]

SCROOGE. Good Heaven! I was bred in this place. I was a boy here!

[SCROOGE freezes, staring at the field beyond. MARLEY's ghost appears beside him: takes SCROOGE's face in his hands, and turns his face to the audience.]

MARLEY. You see this Scrooge: stricken by feeling. Conscious of a thousand odors floating in the air, each one connected with a thousand thoughts, and hopes, and joys, and care long, long forgotten. *[Pause]* This one—this Scrooge—before your very eyes, returns to life, among the living. *[To audience, sternly]* You'd best pay your most careful attention. I would suggest rapt.¹⁷

[There is a small flash and puff of smoke and MARLEY is gone again.]

PAST. Your lip is trembling, Mr. Scrooge. And what is that upon your cheek?

SCROOGE. Upon my cheek? Nothing . . . a blemish on the skin from the eating of over-much grease . . . nothing . . . *[Suddenly]* Kind Spirit of Christmas Past, lead me where you will, but quickly! To be stagnant in this place is, for me, unbearable!

PAST. You recollect the way?

SCROOGE. Remember it! I would know it blindfolded! My bridge, my church, my winding river! *[Staggers about, trying to see it all at once. He weeps again.]*

PAST. These are but shadows of things that have been. They have no consciousness of us.

[Four jocund travelers enter, singing a Christmas song in four-part harmony—"God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen."]

SCROOGE. Listen! I know these men! I know them! I remember the beauty of their song!

PAST. But, why do you remember it so happily? It is Merry Christmas that they say to one another! What is Merry Christmas to you, Mr. Scrooge? Out upon Merry Christmas, right? What good has Merry Christmas ever done you, Mr. Scrooge? . . .

SCROOGE. *[After a long pause]* None. No good. None . . . *[He bows his head.]*

PAST. Look, you, sir, a school ahead. The schoolroom is not quite deserted. A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still.

[SCROOGE falls to the ground; sobbing as he sees, and we see, a small boy, the young SCROOGE, sitting and weeping, bravely, alone at his desk; alone in a vast space, a void.]

SCROOGE. I cannot look on him!

PAST. You must, Mr. Scrooge, you must.

SCROOGE. It's me. *[Pauses; weeps]* Poor boy. He lived inside his head . . . alone . . . *[Pauses; weeps]* poor boy. *[Pauses; stops his weeping]* I wish . . . *[Dries his eyes on his cuff]* ah! it's too late!

PAST. What is the matter?

SCROOGE. There was a boy singing a Christmas Carol outside my door last night. I should like to have given him something: that's all.

PAST. *[Smiles; waves his hand to SCROOGE]* Come. Let us see another Christmas.

[Lights out on little boy. A flash of light. A puff of smoke. Lights up on older boy]

SCROOGE. Look! Me, again! Older now! *[Realizes]* Oh, yes . . . still alone.

[The boy—a slightly older SCROOGE—sits alone in a chair, reading. The door to the

room opens and a young girl enters. She is much, much younger than this slightly older SCROOGE. She is, say, six, and he is, say, twelve. Elder SCROOGE and the GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST stand watching the scene, unseen.]

FAN. Dear, dear brother, I have come to bring you home.

BOY. Home, little Fan?

FAN. Yes! Home, for good and all! Father is so much kinder than he ever used to be, and home's like heaven! He spoke so gently to me one dear night when I was going to bed that I was not afraid to ask him once more if you might come home: and he said "yes" . . . you should: and sent me in a coach to bring you. And you're to be a man and are never to come back here, but first, we're to be together all the Christmas long, and have the merriest time in the world.

BOY. You are quite a woman, little Fan!

[Laughing; she drags at BOY, causing him to stumble to the door with her. Suddenly we hear a mean and terrible voice in the hallway. Off. It is the SCHOOLMASTER.]

SCHOOLMASTER. Bring down Master Scrooge's travel box at once! He is to travel!

FAN. Who is that, Ebenezer?

BOY. O! Quiet, Fan. It is the Schoolmaster, himself!

[The door bursts open and into the room bursts with it the SCHOOLMASTER.]

SCHOOLMASTER. Master Scrooge?

BOY. Oh, Schoolmaster, I'd like you to meet my little sister, Fan, sir . . .

[Two boys struggle on with SCROOGE's trunk.]

FAN. Pleased, sir . . . *[She curtsies.]*

SCHOOLMASTER. You are to travel, Master Scrooge.

SCROOGE. Yes, sir. I know sir . . .

[All start to exit, but FAN grabs the coattail of the mean old SCHOOLMASTER.]

BOY. Fan!

SCHOOLMASTER. What's this?

FAN. Pardon, sir, but I believe that you've forgotten to say your goodbye to my brother, Ebenezer, who stands still now awaiting it . . . [She smiles, curtsies, lowers her eyes.] pardon, sir.

SCHOOLMASTER. [Amazed] I . . . uh . . . harumph . . . uhh . . . well, then . . . [Outstretches hand] Goodbye, Scrooge.

BOY. Uh, well, goodbye, Schoolmaster . . .

[Lights fade out on all but BOY looking at FAN; and SCROOGE and PAST looking at them.]

SCROOGE. Oh, my dear, dear little sister, Fan . . . how I loved her.

PAST. Always a delicate creature, whom a breath might have withered, but she had a large heart . . .

SCROOGE. So she had.

PAST. She died a woman, and had, as I think, children.

SCROOGE. One child.

PAST. True. Your nephew.

SCROOGE. Yes.

PAST. Fine, then. We move on, Mr. Scrooge. That warehouse, there? Do you know it?

SCROOGE. Know it? Wasn't I apprenticed¹⁸ there?

¹⁸ **apprenticed** (ə pren' tist) v.: Receiving financial support and instruction in a trade in return for work.

PAST. We'll have a look.

[They enter the warehouse. The lights crossfade with them, coming up on an old man in Welsh wig: FEZZIWIG.]

SCROOGE. Why, it's old Fezziwig! Bless his heart: it's Fezziwig, alive again!

[FEZZIWIG sits behind a large, high desk, counting. He lays down his pen: looks at the clock: seven bells sound.]

Quittin' time . . .

FEZZIWIG. Quittin' time . . . [He takes off his waistcoat and laughs: calls off] Yo ho, Ebenezer! Dick!

[DICK WILKINS and EBENEZER SCROOGE—a young man version—enter the room. DICK and EBENEZER are FEZZIWIG's apprentices.]

SCROOGE. Dick Wilkins, to be sure! My fellow-'prentice! Bless my soul, yes. There he is. He was very much attached to me, was Dick. Poor Dick! Dear, dear!

FEZZIWIG. Yo ho, my boys. No more work tonight. Christmas Eve, Dick. Christmas, Ebenezer!

[They stand at attention in front of FEZZIWIG: laughing]

Hilli-ho! Clear away, and let's have lots of room here! Hilli-ho, Dick! Chirrup, Ebenezer!

[The young men clear the room, sweep the floor, straighten the pictures, trim the lamps, etc. The space is clear now. A fiddler enters, fiddling.]

Hi-ho, Matthew! Fiddle away . . . where are my daughters?

[The FIDDLER plays. Three young daughters of FEZZIWIG enter followed by six young male suitors. They are dancing to the music. All employees come in: workers, clerks, housemaids, cousins, the baker, etc.]

All dance. Full number wanted here. Throughout the dance, food is brought into the feast. It is "eaten" in dance, by the dancers. EBENEZER dances with all three of the daughters, as does DICK. They compete for the daughters, happily, in the dance. FEZZIWIG dances with his daughters. FEZZIWIG dances with DICK and EBENEZER. The music changes: MRS. FEZZIWIG enters. She lovingly scolds her husband. They dance. She dances with EBENEZER, lifting him and throwing him about. She is enormously fat. When the dance is ended, they all dance off, floating away, as does the music. SCROOGE and the GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST stand alone now. The music is gone.]

PAST. It was a small matter, that Fezziwig made those silly folks so full of gratitude.

SCROOGE. Small!

PAST. Shhh!

[Lights up on DICK and EBENEZER]

DICK. We are blessed, Ebenezer, truly, to have such a master as Mr. Fezziwig!

YOUNG SCROOGE. He is the best, best, the very and absolute best! If ever I own a firm of my own, I shall treat my apprentices with the same dignity and the same grace. We have learned a wonderful lesson from the master, Dick!

DICK. Ah, that's a fact, Ebenezer. That's a fact!

PAST. Was it not a small matter, really? He spent but a few pounds¹⁹ of his mortal money on your small party. Three or four

¹⁹ **pounds** (poundz) *n.*: A common type of money used in Great Britain.

pounds, perhaps. Is that so much that he deserves such praise as you and Dick so lavish now?

SCROOGE. It isn't that! It isn't that, Spirit. Fezziwig had the power to make us happy or unhappy; to make our service light or burdensome: a pleasure or a toil. The happiness he gave is quite as great as if it cost him a fortune.

PAST. What is the matter?

SCROOGE. Nothing particular.

PAST. Something, I think.

SCROOGE. No, no. I should like to be able to say a word or two to my clerk just now! That's all!

[EBENEZER enters the room and shuts down all the lamps. He stretches and yawns. The GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST turns to SCROOGE: all of a sudden.]

PAST. My time grows short! Quick!

[In a flash of light, EBENEZER is gone, and in his place stands an OLDER SCROOGE, this one a man in the prime of his life. Beside him stands a young woman in a mourning dress. She is crying. She speaks to the man, with hostility.]

WOMAN. It matters little . . . to you, very little. Another idol has displaced me.

MAN. What idol has displaced you?

WOMAN. A golden one.

MAN. This is an even-handed dealing of the world. There is nothing on which it is so hard as poverty; and there is nothing it professes to condemn with such severity as the pursuit of wealth!

WOMAN. You fear the world too much. Have I not seen your nobler aspirations fall off one by one, until the master-passion, Gain, engrosses you? Have I not?

SCROOGE. No!

MAN. What then? Even if I have grown so much wiser, what then? Have I changed towards you?

WOMAN. No . . .

MAN. Am I?

WOMAN. Our contract is an old one. It was made when we were both poor and content to be so. You *are* changed. When it was made, you were another man.

MAN. I was not another man: I was a boy.

WOMAN. Your own feeling tells you that you were not what you are. I am. That which promised happiness when we were one in heart is fraught with misery now that we are two . . .

SCROOGE. No!

WOMAN. How often and how keenly I have thought of this, I will not say. It is enough that I *have* thought of it, and can release you . . .

SCROOGE. [*Quietly*] Don't release me, madame . . .

MAN. Have I ever sought release?

WOMAN. In words. No. Never.

MAN. In what then?

WOMAN. In a changed nature: in an altered spirit. In everything that made my love of any worth or value in your sight. If this has never been between us, tell me, would you seek me out and try to win me now? Ah, no!

SCROOGE. Ah, yes!

MAN. You think not?

WOMAN. I would gladly think otherwise if I could, heaven knows! But if you were free to-day, tomorrow, yesterday, can even I believe

that you would choose a dowerless girl²⁰—you who in your very confidence with her weigh everything by Gain; or, choosing her, do I not know that your repentance and regret would surely follow? I do; and I release you. With a full heart, for the love of him you once were.

SCROOGE. Please, I . . . I . . .

MAN. Please, I . . . I . . .

WOMAN. Please. You may—the memory of what is past half makes me hope you will—have pain in this. A very, very brief time, and you will dismiss the memory of it, as an unprofitable dream, from which it happened well that you awoke. May you be happy in the life that you have chosen for yourself . . .

SCROOGE. No!

WOMAN. Yourself . . . alone . . .

SCROOGE. No!

WOMAN. Goodbye, Ebenezer . . .

SCROOGE. Don't let her go!

MAN. Goodbye.

SCROOGE. No!

[*She exits. SCROOGE goes to younger man: himself.*]

You fool! Mindless loon! You fool!

MAN. [*To exited woman*] Fool. Mindless loon. Fool . . .

SCROOGE. Don't say that! Spirit, remove me from this place.

PAST. I have told you these were shadows of the things that have been. They are what they are. Do not blame me, Mr. Scrooge.

SCROOGE. Remove me! I cannot bear it!

20. a dowerless (dou' or les) **girl:** A girl without a dowery, the property or wealth a woman brought to her husband at marriage.

[The faces of all who appeared in this scene are now projected for a moment around the stage: enormous, flimsy, silent.]

Leave me! Take me back! Haunt me no longer!

[There is a sudden flash of light: a flare. The GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST is gone. SCROOGE is, for the moment, alone onstage. His bed is turned down, across the stage. A small candle burns now in SCROOGE's hand. There is a child's cap in his other hand. He slowly crosses the stage to his bed, to sleep. MARLEY appears behind SCROOGE, who continues his long, elderly cross to bed. MARLEY speaks directly to the audience.]

MARLEY. Scrooge must sleep now. He must surrender to the irresistible drowsiness caused by the recognition of what was. [Pauses] The cap he carries is from ten lives past: his boyhood cap . . . donned atop a hopeful hairy head . . . askew, perhaps, or at a rakish angle. Doffed now in honor of regret.²¹ Perhaps even too heavy to carry in his present state of weak remorse . . .

[SCROOGE drops the cap. He lies atop his bed. He sleeps. To audience]

He sleeps. For him, there's even more trouble ahead. [Smiles] For you? The play house tells me there's hot cider, as should be your anticipation for the specter Christmas Present and Future, for I promise you both. [Smiles again] So, I pray you hurry back to your seats refreshed and ready for a miser—to turn his coat of gray into a blazen Christmas holly-red.

[A flash of lightning. A clap of thunder. Bats fly. Ghostly music. MARLEY is gone.]

²¹ **donned . . . regret:** To don and doff a hat means to put it on and take it off; askew means "crooked," and at a rakish angle means "having a dashing or jaunty look."

THINKING ABOUT THE SELECTION

Recalling

1. What relationship did Scrooge and Marley have in the past?
2. For what purpose does Scrooge's nephew come to see Scrooge?
3. What expression of Scrooge's sums up his attitude toward Christmas? Why?
4. How does Scrooge respond to the Thin Man and the Portly Man's request for money?
5. How does he respond to Cratchit's request for Christmas Day off?
6. What scenes of Scrooge's past life are revealed by the Ghost of Christmas Past?

Interpreting

7. How do the scenes of Scrooge's past reveal a change in him?
8. How does Scrooge react to each of these scenes?

Applying

9. Do you think people who are like Scrooge are ever really happy? Why or why not?

ANALYZING LITERATURE

Understanding Plot and Exposition

The **plot** of a play is the sequence of its incidents and events. The first part of the plot is called the **exposition**. Here the opening situation is established, major characters are introduced, and the central problem of the play is made clear. Also, here earlier events are revealed.

Once the opening situation is established, the plot of the play develops until the climax is reached. The part of the play that builds up to the climax is called the rising action.

1. Describe the situation established in Scene 1 of *A Christmas Carol: Scrooge and Marley*.
2. What earlier events are disclosed here?
3. What problem does Scrooge have?
4. As you were reading Act I, what thoughts or questions did you have about how the story would turn out?

GUIDE FOR READING

A Christmas Carol: Scrooge and Marley, Act II

Character and Theme

A **character** in a play is portrayed, in part, by what he or she says in the dialogue. If the play is performed onstage, then the acting will greatly affect the portrayal. The actor's facial expressions, gestures, movements, speaking style, and so on, will make the character come alive. To understand a character when you are reading a play, therefore, imagine an actor performing the lines.

The **theme** of a play is its central idea, or insight into life. One way to arrive at the theme of a play is to notice how the main character changes. If you can explain why the main character changes for the better, or for the worse, you probably are very close to understanding the theme.

Look For

As you read Act II, notice how Scrooge reacts to the scenes presented by the Ghosts of Christmas Present and Christmas Future. In what way does he change? Why does he change? What does the change suggest about the theme of the play?

Writing

Write the heading What Makes People Change? on a piece of paper. Beneath it list six experiences that you think could lead to a big change in a person's life and behavior. Discuss your list with your classmates.

Vocabulary

Knowing the following words will help you as you read Act II of *A Christmas Carol: Scrooge and Marley*.

astonish (ə stān' ish) v.:
Amaze (p. 283)

compulsion (kəm pul' shən)
n.: A driving, irresistible force
(p. 285)

severe (sə vir') adj.: Harsh
(p. 285)

meager (mē' gər) adj.: Of poor
quality, small in amount (p. 286)

threadbare (thred' ber) adj.:
Worn, shabby (p. 287)

audible (ō' də b'l) adj.: Loud
enough to be heard (p. 291)

gnarled (nārd) adj.: Knotty and
twisted (p. 291)

dispelled (dis peld') v.: Scat-
tered and driven away, made to
vanish (p. 297)

ACT II

Scene 1

[Lights. Choral music is sung. Curtain. SCROOGE, in bed, sleeping, in spotlight. We cannot yet see the interior of his room. MARLEY, opposite, in spotlight equal to SCROOGE'S. MARLEY laughs. He tosses his hand in the air and a flame shoots from it, magically, into the air. There is a thunder clap, and then another: a lightning flash, and then another. Ghostly music plays under. Colors change. MARLEY'S spotlight has gone out and now reappears, with MARLEY in it, standing next to the bed and the sleeping SCROOGE. MARLEY addresses the audience directly.]

MARLEY. Hear this snoring Scrooge! Sleeping to escape the nightmare that is his waking day. What shall I bring to him now? I'm afraid nothing would astonish old Scrooge now. Not after what he's seen. Not a baby boy, not a rhinoceros, nor anything in between would astonish Ebenezer Scrooge just now. I can think of nothing . . . [Suddenly] that's it! Nothing! [He speaks confidentially.] I'll have the clock strike one and, when he awakes expecting my second messenger, there will be no one . . . nothing. Then I'll have the bell strike twelve. And then one again . . . and then nothing. Nothing . . . [Laughs] nothing will . . . astonish him. I think it will work.

[The bell tolls one. SCROOGE leaps awake.]

SCROOGE. One! One! This is it: time! [Looks about the room] Nothing!

[The bell tolls midnight.]

Midnight! How can this be? I'm sleeping backwards.

[One again]

Good heavens! One again! I'm sleeping back and forth! [A pause. SCROOGE looks about.] Nothing! Absolutely nothing!

[Suddenly, thunder and lightning. MARLEY laughs and disappears. The room shakes and glows. There is suddenly springlike music. SCROOGE makes a run for the door.]

MARLEY. Scrooge!

SCROOGE. What?

MARLEY. Stay you put!

SCROOGE. Just checking to see if anyone is in here.

[Lights and thunder again: more music. MARLEY is of a sudden gone. In his place sits the GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT—to be called in the stage directions of the play. PRESENT—center of room. Heaped up on the floor, to form a kind of throne, are turkeys, geese, game, poultry, brawn, great joints of meat, suckling pigs, long wreaths of sausages, mince-pies, plum puddings, barrels of oysters, red hot chestnuts, cherry-cheeked apples, juicy oranges, luscious pears, immense twelfth cakes, and seething bowls of punch, that make the chamber dim with their delicious steam. Upon this throne sits PRESENT, glorious to see. He bears a torch, shaped as a Horn of Plenty.¹ SCROOGE hops out of the door, and then peeks back again into his bedroom. PRESENT calls to SCROOGE.]

PRESENT. Ebenezer Scrooge. Come in, come in! Come in and know me better!

SCROOGE. Hello. How should I call you?

PRESENT. I am the Ghost of Christmas Present. Look upon me.

1. Horn of Plenty: A horn overflowing with fruits, flowers, and grain, standing for wealth and abundance.

[PRESENT is wearing a simple green robe. The walls around the room are now covered in greenery, as well. The room seems to be a perfect grove now: leaves of holly, mistletoe and ivy reflect the stage lights. Suddenly, there is a mighty roar of flame in the fireplace and now the hearth burns with a lavish, warming fire. There is an ancient scabbard girdling the GHOST's middle,

but without sword. The sheath is gone to rust.]

You have never seen the like of me before?

SCROOGE. Never.

PRESENT. You have never walked forth with younger members of my family: my elder brothers born on Christmases past.

SCROOGE. I don't think I have. I'm afraid I've not. Have you had many brothers. Spirit?

PRESENT. More than eighteen hundred.

SCROOGE. A tremendous family to provide for! [PRESENT stands] Spirit, conduct me where you will. I went forth last night on compulsion, and learnt a lesson which is working now. Tonight, if you have aught to teach me, let me profit by it.

PRESENT. Touch my robe.

[SCROOGE walks cautiously to PRESENT and touches his robe. When he does, lightning flashes, thunder claps, music plays. Blackout]

Scene 2

[PROLOGUE: MARLEY stands spotlit. L. He speaks directly to the audience.]

MARLEY. My ghostly friend now leads my living partner through the city's streets.

[Lights up on SCROOGE and PRESENT]

See them there and hear the music people make when the weather is severe, as it is now.

PRESENT. These revelers, Mr. Scrooge, carry their own dinners to their jobs, where they will work to bake the meals the rich men and women of this city will eat as their Christ-

mas dinners. Generous people these . . . to care for the others. so . . .

[PRESENT walks among the choral group and a sparkling incense³ falls from his torch on to their baskets, as he pulls the covers off of the baskets. Some of the choral group become angry with each other.]

MAN #1. Hey, you, watch where you're going.

MAN #2. Watch it yourself, mate!

[PRESENT sprinkles them directly, they change.]

MAN #1. I pray go in ahead of me. It's Christmas. You be first!

MAN #2. No, no, I must insist that YOU be first!

MAN #1. All right, I shall be, and gratefully so.

MAN #2. The pleasure is equally mine, for being able to watch you pass, smiling.

MAN #1. I would find it a shame to quarrel on Christmas Day . . .

MAN #2. As would I.

MAN #1. Merry Christmas then, friend!

MAN #2. And a Merry Christmas straight back to you!

[Church bells toll. The choral group enter the buildings: the shops and restaurants; they exit the stage, shutting their doors closed behind them. All sound stops. SCROOGE and PRESENT are alone again.]

SCROOGE. What is it you sprinkle from your torch?

PRESENT. Kindness.

³ **incense** (in' sents) *n.*: Any of various substances that produce a pleasant odor when burned.

SCROOGE. Do you sprinkle your kindness on any particular people or on all people?

PRESENT. To any person kindly given. And to the very poor most of all.

SCROOGE. Why to the very poor most?

PRESENT. Because the very poor need it most. Touch my heart . . . here, Mr. Scrooge. We have another journey.

[SCROOGE touches the GHOST's heart and music plays, lights change color, lightning flashes, thunder claps. A choral group appears on the street, singing Christmas carols.]

Scene 3

[MARLEY stands spotlighted in front of a scrim on which is painted the exterior of CRATCHIT's four-roomed house. There is a flash and a clap and MARLEY is gone. The lights shift color again, the scrim flies away, and we are in the interior of the CRATCHIT family home. SCROOGE is there, with the SPIRIT (PRESENT), watching MRS. CRATCHIT set the table, with the help of BELINDA CRATCHIT and PETER CRATCHIT, a baby, pokes a fork into the mashed potatoes on his highchair's tray. He also chews on his shirt collar.]

SCROOGE. What is this place, Spirit?

PRESENT. This is the home of your employee, Mr. Scrooge. Don't you know it?

SCROOGE. Do you mean Cratchit, Spirit? Do you mean this is Cratchit's home?

PRESENT. None other.

SCROOGE. These children are his?

PRESENT. There are more to come presently.

SCROOGE. On his meager earnings! What foolishness!

PRESENT. Foolishness, is it?

SCROOGE. Wouldn't you say so? Fifteen shillings⁴ a week's what he gets!

PRESENT. I would say that he gets the pleasure of his family, fifteen times a week times the number of hours a day! Wait, Mr. Scrooge. Wait, listen and watch. You might actually learn something . . .

MRS. CRATCHIT. What has ever got your precious father then? And your brother, Tiny Tim? And Martha warn't as late last Christmas by half an hour!

[MARTHA opens the door, speaking to her mother as she does.]

MARTHA. Here's Martha, now, Mother! *[She laughs. The CRATCHIT CHILDREN squeal with delight.]*

BELINDA. It's Martha, Mother! Here's Martha!

PETER. Marthmama, Marthmama! Hulloo!

BELINDA. Hurrah! Martha! Martha! There's such an enormous goose for us, Martha!

MRS. CRATCHIT. Why, bless your heart alive, my dear, how late you are!

MARTHA. We'd a great deal of work to finish up last night, and had to clear away this morning, Mother.

MRS. CRATCHIT. Well, never mind so long as you are come. Sit ye down before the fire, my dear, and have a warm. Lord bless ye!

BELINDA. No, no! There's Father coming. Hide, Martha, hide!

[MARTHA giggles and hides herself.]

MARTHA. Where? Here?

PETER. Hide, hide!

BELINDA. Not there! *THERE!*

4. fifteen shillings: A small amount of money for a week's work.

[MARTHA is hidden. BOB CRATCHIT enters, carrying TINY TIM atop his shoulder. He wears a threadbare and fringeless comforter hanging down in front of him. TINY TIM carries small crutches and his small legs are bound in an iron frame brace.]

BOB and TINY TIM. Merry Christmas.

BOB. Merry Christmas my love, Merry Christmas Peter, Merry Christmas Belinda. Why, where is Martha?

MRS. CRATCHIT. Not coming.

BOB. Not coming? Not coming upon Christmas Day?

MARTHA. [Pokes head out] Ohhh, poor Father. Don't be disappointed.

BOB. What's this?

MARTHA. 'Tis I!

BOB. Martha! [They embrace.]

TINY TIM. Martha! Martha!

MARTHA. Tiny Tim!

[TINY TIM is placed in MARTHA'S arms. BELINDA and PETER rush him offstage.]

BELINDA. Come, brother! You must come hear the pudding singing in the copper.

TINY TIM. The pudding? What flavor have we?

PETER. Plum! Plum!

TINY TIM! Oh, Mother! I love plum!

[The children exit the stage, giggling.]

MRS. CRATCHIT. And how did little Tim behave?

BOB. As good as gold, and even better. Somehow he gets thoughtful sitting by himself so much, and thinks the strangest things you ever heard. He told me, coming home, that he hoped people saw him in the church, be-

cause he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remember upon Christmas Day, who made lame beggars walk and blind men see. [Pauses] He has the oddest ideas sometimes, but he seems all the while to be growing stronger and more hearty . . . one would never know. [Hears TIM'S crutch on floor outside door]

PETER. The goose has arrived to be eaten!

BELINDA. Oh, mama, mama, it's beautiful.

MARTHA. It's a perfect goose, Mother!

TINY TIM. To this Christmas goose, Mother and Father I say . . . [Yells] Hurrah! Hurrah!

OTHER CHILDREN. [Copying TIM] Hurrah! Hurrah!

[The family sits round the table. BOB and MRS. CRATCHIT serve the trimmings, quickly. All sit; all bow heads; all pray.]

BOB. Thank you, dear Lord, for your many gifts . . . our dear children; our wonderful meal; our love for one another; and the warmth of our small fire— [Looks up at all] A merry Christmas to us, my dear. God bless us!

ALL. [Except TIM] Merry Christmas! God bless us!

TINY TIM. [In a short silence] God bless us every one.

[All freeze. Spotlight on PRESENT and SCROOGE]

SCROOGE. Spirit, tell me if Tiny Tim will live.

PRESENT. I see a vacant seat . . . in the poor chimney corner, and a crutch without an owner, carefully preserved. If these shadows remain unaltered by the future, the child will die.

SCROOGE. No, no, kind Spirit! Say he will be spared!

PRESENT. If these shadows remain unaltered by the future, none other of my race will find him here. What then? If he be like to die, he had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.

[SCROOGE bows his head. We hear BOB's voice speak SCROOGE's name.]

BOB. Mr. Scrooge . . .

SCROOGE. Huh? What's that? Who calls?

BOB. [His glass raised in a toast] I'll give you Mr. Scrooge, the Founder of the Feast!

SCROOGE. Me, Bob? You toast me?

PRESENT. Save your breath, Mr. Scrooge. You can't be seen or heard.

MRS. CRATCHIT. The Founder of the Feast, indeed! I wish I had him here, that miser Scrooge. I'd give him a piece of my mind to feast upon, and I hope he'd have a good appetite for it!

BOB. My dear! Christmas Day!

MRS. CRATCHIT. It should be Christmas Day. I am sure, on which one drinks the health of such an odious, stingy, unfeeling man as Mr. Scrooge . . .

SCROOGE. Oh, Spirit, must I? . . .

MRS. CRATCHIT. You know he is, Robert! Nobody knows it better than you do, poor fellow!

BOB. This is Christmas Day, and I should like to drink to the health of the man who employs me and allows me to earn my living and our support and that man is Ebenezer Scrooge . . .

MRS. CRATCHIT. I'll drink to his health for your sake and the day's, but not for his sake . . . a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you, Mr. Scrooge, wherever you may be this day!

SCROOGE. Just here, kind madam . . . out of sight, out of sight . . .

BOB. Thank you, my dear. Thank you.

SCROOGE. Thank you, Bob . . . and Mrs. Cratchit, too. No one else is toasting me, . . . not now . . . not ever. Of that I am sure . . .

BOB. Children . . .

ALL. Merry Christmas to Mr. Scrooge.

BOB. I'll pay you sixpence, Tim, for my favorite song.

TINY TIM. Oh, Father, I'd so love to sing it, but not for pay. This Christmas goose—this feast—you and Mother, my brother and sisters close with me: that's my pay—

BOB. Martha, will you play the notes on the lute,⁵ for Tiny Tim's song.

BELINDA. May I sing, too, Father?

BOB. We'll all sing.

[They sing a song about a tiny child lost in the snow—probably from Wordsworth's poem. TIM sings the lead vocal; all chime in for the chorus. Their song fades under. AS THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT speaks.]

PRESENT. Mark my words, Ebenezer Scrooge. I do not present the Cratchits to you because they are a handsome, or brilliant family. They are not handsome. They are not brilliant. They are not well-dressed, or tasteful to the times. Their shoes are not even waterproofed by virtue of money or cleverness spent. So when the pavement is wet, so are the insides of their shoes and the tops of their toes. These are the Cratchits, Mr. Scrooge. They are not highly special. They are happy, grateful, pleased with one another, contented with the time and how it passes. They don't sing very well, do they? But, nonetheless, they do sing . . . [Pauses] think of that, Scrooge. Fifteen shillings a week and they do sing . . . hear their song until its end.

SCROOGE. I am listening.

[The chorus sings full volume now, until . . . the song ends here.]

Spirit, it must be time for us to take our leave. I feel in my heart that it is . . . that I must think on that which I have seen here . . .

PRESENT. Touch my robe again . . .

[SCROOGE touches PRESENT's robe. The lights fade out on the CRATCHITS, who sit, frozen.

Scene 4

[MARLEY appears D.L. in single spotlight. A storm brews. Thunder and lightning. SCROOGE and PRESENT "fly" past. U. The storm continues, furiously, and, now and again, SCROOGE and PRESENT will zip past in their travels. MARLEY will speak straight out to the audience.]

MARLEY. The Ghost of Christmas Present, my co-worker in this attempt to turn a miser, flies about now with that very miser, Scrooge, from street to street, and he points out partygoers on their way to Christmas parties. If one were to judge from the numbers of people on their way to friendly gatherings, one might think that no one was left at home to give anyone welcome . . . but that's not the case, is it? Every home is expecting company and . . . [He laughs.] Scrooge is amazed.

[SCROOGE and PRESENT zip past again. The lights fade up around them. We are in the NEPHEW's home, in the living room, PRESENT and SCROOGE stand watching the NEPHEW: FRED and his wife, fixing the fire.]

SCROOGE. What is this place? We've moved from the mines!

PRESENT. You do not recognize them?

SCROOGE. It is my nephew! . . . and the one he married . . .

[MARLEY waves his hand and there is a lightning flash. He disappears.]

FRED. It strikes me as soooooo funny, to think of what he said . . . that Christmas was a humbug, as I live! He believed it!

WIFE. More shame for him, Fred!

FRED. Well, he's a comical old fellow, that's the truth.

WIFE. I have no patience with him.

FRED. Oh, I have! I am sorry for him: I couldn't be angry with him if I tried. Who suffers by his ill whims? Himself, always . . .

SCROOGE. It's me they talk of, isn't it, Spirit?

FRED. Here, wife, consider this. Uncle Scrooge takes it into his head to dislike us,

and he won't come and dine with us. What's the consequence?

WIFE. Oh . . . you're sweet to say what I think you're about to say, too, Fred . . .

FRED. What's the consequence? He don't lose much of a dinner by it, I can tell you that!

WIFE. Oooooooo, Fred! Indeed, I think he loses a very good dinner . . . ask my sisters, or your bachelor friend, Topper . . . ask any of them. They'll tell you what old Scrooge, your uncle, missed: a dandy meal!

FRED. Well, that's something of a relief, wife. Glad to hear it! [He hugs his wife. They laugh. They kiss.] The truth is, he misses much yet. I mean to give him the same chance every year, whether he likes it or not, for I pity him. Nay, he is my only uncle and I feel for the old miser . . . but, I tell you, wife: I see my dear and perfect mother's face on his own wizened cheeks and brow: brother and sister they were, and I cannot erase that from each view of him I take . . .

WIFE. I understand what you say, Fred, and I am with you in your yearly asking. But he never will accept, you know. He never will.

FRED. Well, true, wife. Uncle may rail at Christmas till he dies. I think I shook him some with my visit yesterday . . . [Laughing] I refused to grow angry . . . no matter how nasty he became . . . [Whoops] It was HE who grew angry, wife! [They both laugh now.]

SCROOGE. What he says is true, Spirit . . .

FRED and WIFE. Bah, humbug!

FRED. [Embracing his wife] There is much laughter in our marriage, wife. It pleases me. You please me . . .

WIFE. And you please me, Fred. You are a good man . . . [*They embrace.*] Come now. We must have a look at the meal . . . our guests will soon arrive . . . my sisters, Topper . . .

FRED. A toast first . . . [*He hands her a glass.*] A toast to Uncle Scrooge . . . [*Fills their glasses*]

WIFE. A toast to him?

FRED. Uncle Scrooge has given us plenty of merriment. I am sure, and it would be ungrateful not to drink to his health. And I say . . . *Uncle Scrooge!*

WIFE. [*Laughing*] You're a proper loon,⁶ Fred . . . and I'm a proper wife to you . . . [*She raises her glass.*] *Uncle Scrooge!* [*They drink. They embrace. They kiss.*]

SCROOGE. Spirit, please, make me visible! Make me audible! I want to talk with my nephew and my niece!

[*Calls out to them. The lights that light the room and FRED and wife fade out. SCROOGE and PRESENT are alone, spotlit.*]

PRESENT. These shadows are gone to you now, Mr. Scrooge. You may return to them later tonight in your dreams. [*Pauses*] My time grows short, Ebenezer Scrooge. Look you on me! Do you see how I've aged?

SCROOGE. Your hair has gone gray! Your skin, wrinkled! Are spirits' lives so short?

PRESENT. My stay upon this globe is very brief. It ends tonight.

SCROOGE. Tonight?

PRESENT. At midnight. The time is drawing near!

6. a proper loon: A silly person.

[*Clock strikes 11:45.*]

Hear those chimes? In a quarter hour, my life will have been spent! Look, Scrooge, man. Look you here.

[*Two gnarled baby dolls are taken from PRESENT's skirts.*]

SCROOGE. Who are they?

PRESENT. They are Man's children, and they cling to me, appealing from their fathers. The boy is Ignorance; the girl is Want. Beware them both, and all of their degree, but most of all beware this boy, for I see that written on his brow which is doom, unless the writing be erased. [*He stretches out his arm. His voice is now amplified: loudly and oddly.*]

SCROOGE. Have they no refuge or resource?

PRESENT. Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses? [*Twelve chimes*] Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?

[*A PHANTOM, hooded, appears in dim light, D., opposite.*]

Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?

[*PRESENT begins to deliquesce. SCROOGE calls after him.*]

SCROOGE. Spirit, I'm frightened! Don't leave me! Spirit!

PRESENT. Prisons? Workhouses? Prisons? Workhouses . . .

[*He is gone. SCROOGE is alone now with the PHANTOM, who is, of course, the GHOST OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE. The PHANTOM is shrouded in black. Only its outstretched hand is visible from under his ghostly garment.*]

SCROOGE. Who are you. Phantom? Oh, yes, I think I know you! You are, are you not, the Spirit of Christmas Yet to Come? *[No reply]* And you are about to show me the shadows of the things that have not yet happened, but will happen in time before us. Is that not so, Spirit?

[The PHANTOM allows SCROOGE a look at his face. No other reply wanted here. A nervous giggle here]

Oh, Ghost of the Future, I fear you more than any Specter I have seen! But, as I know that your purpose is to do me good and as I hope to live to be another man from what I was, I am prepared to bear you company.

[FUTURE does not reply, but for a stiff arm, hand and finger set, pointing forward.]

Lead on, then, lead on. The night is waning fast, and it is precious time to me. Lead on, Spirit!

[FUTURE moves away from SCROOGE in the same rhythm and motion employed at its arrival. SCROOGE falls into the same pattern, a considerable space apart from the SPIRIT. In the space between them, MARLEY appears. He looks to FUTURE and then to SCROOGE. He claps his hands. Thunder and lightning. Three BUSINESSMEN appear, spotlighted singularly: One is D.L.: One is D.R.: One is U.C. Thus, six points of the stage should now be spotted in light. MARLEY will watch this scene from his position. C. SCROOGE and FUTURE are R. and L. of C.]

FIRST BUSINESSMAN. Oh, no, I don't know much about it either way, I only know he's dead.

SECOND BUSINESSMAN. When did he die?

FIRST BUSINESSMAN. Last night, I believe.

SECOND BUSINESSMAN. Why, what was the matter with him? I thought he'd never die, really . . .

FIRST BUSINESSMAN. *[Yawning]* Goodness knows, goodness knows . . .

THIRD BUSINESSMAN. What has he done with his money?

SECOND BUSINESSMAN. I haven't heard. Have you?

FIRST BUSINESSMAN. Left it to his Company, perhaps. Money to money: you know the expression . . .

THIRD BUSINESSMAN. He hasn't left it to me. That's all I know . . .

FIRST BUSINESSMAN. *[Laughing]* Nor to me . . . *[Looks at SECOND BUSINESSMAN]* You, then? You got his money???

SECOND BUSINESSMAN. *[Laughing]* Me, me, his money? Nooooo! *[They all laugh.]*

THIRD BUSINESSMAN. It's likely to be a cheap funeral, for upon my life, I don't know of a living soul who'd care to venture to it. Suppose we make up a party and volunteer?

SECOND BUSINESSMAN. I don't mind going if a lunch is provided, but I must be fed, if I make one.

FIRST BUSINESSMAN. Well, I am the most disinterested among you, for I never wear black gloves, and I never eat lunch. But I'll offer to go, if anybody else will. When I come to think of it, I'm not all sure that I wasn't his most particular friend; for we used to stop and speak whenever we met. Well, then . . . bye, bye!

SECOND BUSINESSMAN. Bye, bye . . .

THIRD BUSINESSMAN. Bye, bye . . .

[They glide offstage in three separate directions. Their lights follow them.]

SCROOGE. Spirit, why did you show me this? Why do you show me businessmen from my streets as they take the death of Jacob Marley. That is a thing past. You are future!

[JACOB MARLEY laughs a long, deep laugh. There is a thunder clap and lightning flash, and he is gone. SCROOGE faces FUTURE, alone on stage now. FUTURE wordlessly stretches out his arm-hand-and-finger-set, pointing into the distance. U. There, above them, Scoundrels "fly" by, half-dressed and slovenly. When this scene has passed, a woman enters the playing area. She is almost at once followed by a second woman; and then a man in faded black; and then, suddenly, an old man, who smokes a pipe. The old man scares the other three. They laugh, anxious.]

FIRST WOMAN. Look here, old Joe, here's a chance! If we haven't all three met here without meaning it!

OLD JOE. You couldn't have met in a better place. Come into the parlor. You were made free of it long ago, you know; and the other two an't strangers *[He stands; shuts a door. Shrieking]* We're all suitable to our calling. We're well matched. Come into the parlor. Come into the parlor . . .

[They follow him D. SCROOGE and FUTURE are now in their midst, watching; silent. A truck comes in on which is set a small wall with fireplace and a screen of rags, etc. All props for the scene.]

Let me just rake this fire over a bit . . .

[He does. He trims his lamp with the stem of his pipe. The FIRST WOMAN throws a large bundle on to the floor. She sits beside it, crosslegged; defiantly.]

FIRST WOMAN. What odds then? What odds, Mrs. Dilber? Every person has a right to take care of themselves. HE always did!

MRS. DILBER. That's true indeed! No man more so!

FIRST WOMAN. Why, then, don't stand staring as if you was afraid, woman! Who's the wiser? We're not going to pick holes in each other's coats, I suppose?

MRS. DILBER. No, indeed! We should hope not!

FIRST WOMAN. Very well, then! That's enough. Who's the worse for the loss of a few things like these? Not a dead man. I suppose?

MRS. DILBER. *[Laughing]* No, indeed!

FIRST WOMAN. If he wanted to keep 'em after he was dead, the wicked old screw, why wasn't he natural in his lifetime? If he had been, he'd have had somebody to look after him when he was struck with Death, instead of lying gasping out his last there, alone by himself.

MRS. DILBER. It's the truest word that was ever spoke. It's a judgment on him.

FIRST WOMAN. I wish it were a heavier one, and it should have been, you may depend on it, if I could have laid my hands on anything else. Open that bundle, old Joe, and let me know the value of it. Speak out plain. I'm not afraid to be the first, nor afraid for them to see it. We knew pretty well that we were helping ourselves, before we met here, I believe. It's no sin. Open the bundle, Joe.

FIRST MAN. No, no, my dear! I won't think of letting you being the first to show what you've . . . earned . . . earned from this. I throw in mine. *[He takes a bundle from his shoulder, turns it upside down, and emp-*

ties its contents out on to the floor.] It's not very extensive, see . . . seals . . . a pencil case . . . sleeve buttons . . .

MRS. DILBER. Nice sleeve buttons, though . . .

FIRST MAN. Not bad, not bad . . . a brooch there . . .

OLD JOE. Not really valuable, I'm afraid . . .

FIRST MAN. How much, old Joe?

OLD JOE. [*Writing on the wall with chalk*] A pitiful lot, really. Ten and six and not a sixpence more!

FIRST MAN. You're not serious!

OLD JOE. That's your account and I wouldn't give another sixpence if I was to be boiled for not doing it. Who's next?

MRS. DILBER. Me! [*Dumps out contents of her bundle*] Sheets, towels, silver spoons, silver sugar-tongs . . . some boots . . .

OLD JOE. [*Writing on wall*] I always give too much to the ladies. It's a weakness of mine and that's the way I ruin myself. Here's your total comin' up . . . two pounds-ten . . . if you asked me for another penny, and made it an open question, I'd repent of being so liberal and knock off half-a-crown.

FIRST WOMAN. And now do MY bundle, Joe.

OLD JOE. [*Kneeling to open knots on her bundle*] So many knots, madam . . . [*He drags out large curtains; dark*] What do you call this? Bed curtains!

FIRST WOMAN. [*Laughing*] Ah, yes, bed curtains!

OLD JOE. You don't mean to say you took 'em down, rings and all, with him lying there?

FIRST WOMAN. Yes, I did, why not?

OLD JOE. You were born to make your fortune and you'll certainly do it.

FIRST WOMAN. I certainly shan't hold my hand, when I can get anything in it by reaching it out, for the sake of such a man as he was, I promise you, Joe. Don't drop that lamp oil on those blankets, now!

OLD JOE. His blankets?

FIRST WOMAN. Whose else's do you think? He isn't likely to catch cold without 'em. I daresay.

OLD JOE. I hope that he didn't die of anything catching? Eh?

FIRST WOMAN. Don't you be afraid of that. I ain't so fond of his company that I'd loiter about him for such things if he did. Ah! You may look through that shirt till your eyes ache, but you won't find a hole in it, nor a threadbare place. It's the best he had, and a fine one, too. They'd have wasted it, if it hadn't been for me.

OLD JOE. What do you mean "They'd have wasted it?"

FIRST WOMAN. Putting it on him to be buried in, to be sure. Somebody was fool enough to do it, but I took it off again . . . [*She laughs, as do they all, nervously.*] If calico⁷ an't good enough for such a purpose, it isn't good enough then for anything. It's quite as becoming to the body. He can't look uglier than he did in that one!

SCROOGE. [*A low-pitched moan emits from his mouth; from the bones.*] [OOOOOOOOoo
oooOOOOOooooooOOOOOOOOooooooOOOOO
OooooooOO!]

OLD JOE. One pound six for the lot. [*He produces a small flannel bag filled with*

7. **calico** (kal' ə kō) n.: A coarse and cheap cloth.

money. He divvies it out. He continues to pass around the money as he speaks. All are laughing.] That's the end of it, you see! He frightened every one away from him while he was alive, to profit us when he was dead! Hah ha ha!

ALL. HAHAHAHahahahahahahah!

SCROOGE. OOOooooOOOooooOOOooooOOOooooOOooooOOooooOOOoooo! [He screams at them.] Obscene demons! Why not market the corpse itself, as sell its trimming??? [Suddenly] Oh, Spirit, I see it, I see it! This unhappy man—this stripped-bare corpse . . . could very well be my own. My life holds parallel! My life ends that way now!

[SCROOGE backs into something in the dark behind his spotlight. SCROOGE looks at FUTURE, who points to the corpse. SCROOGE pulls back the blanket. The corpse is, of course, SCROOGE, who screams. He falls aside the bed; weeping.]

Spirit, this is a fearful place. In leaving it, I shall not leave its lesson, trust me. Let us go!

[FUTURE points to the corpse.]

Spirit, let me see some tenderness connected with a death, or that dark chamber, which we just left now, Spirit, will be forever present to me.

[FUTURE spreads his robes again. Thunder and lightning. Lights up, U., in the Cratchit home setting. MRS. CRATCHIT and her daughters, sewing]

TINY TIM'S VOICE. [Off] And He took a child and set him in the midst of them.

SCROOGE. [Looking about the room: to FUTURE] Huh? Who spoke? Who said that?

MRS. CRATCHIT. [Puts down her sewing] The color hurts my eyes. [Rubs her eyes] That's

better. My eyes grow weak sewing by candle-light. I shouldn't want to show your father weak eyes when he comes home . . . not for the world! It must be near his time . . .

PETER. [In corner, reading. Looks up from book] Past it, rather. But I think he's been walking a bit slower than usual these last few evenings, Mother.

MRS. CRATCHIT. I have known him walk with . . . [Pauses] I have know him walk with Tiny Tim upon his shoulder and very fast indeed.

PETER. So have I, Mother! Often!

DAUGHTER. So have I.

MRS. CRATCHIT. But he was very light to carry and his father loved him so, that it was not trouble—no trouble.

[BOB, at door]

And there is your father at the door.

[BOB CRATCHIT enters. He wears a comforter. He is cold, forlorn.]

PETER. Father!

BOB. Hello, wife, children . . .

[The daughter weeps: turns away from CRATCHIT.]

Children! How good to see you all! And you, wife. And look at this sewing! I've no doubt, with all your industry, we'll have a quilt to set down upon our knees in church on Sunday!

MRS. CRATCHIT. You made the arrangements today, then, Robert, for the . . . service . . . to be on Sunday.

BOB. The funeral. Oh, well, yes, yes, I did. I wish you could have gone. It would have done you good to see how green a place it is. But you'll see it often. I promised him that I

would walk there on Sunday, after the service. *[Suddenly]* My little, little child! My little child!

ALL CHILDREN. *[Hugging him]* Oh, Father . . .

BOB. *[He stands]* Forgive me. I saw Mr. Scrooge's nephew, who you know I'd just met once before, and he was so wonderful to me, wife . . . he is the most pleasant-spoken gentleman I've ever met . . . he said "I am heartily sorry for it and heartily sorry for your good wife. If I can be of service to you in any way, here's where I live." And he gave me this card.

PETER. Let me see it!

BOB. And he looked me straight in the eye, wife, and said, meaningfully, "I pray you'll come to me, Mr. Cratchit, if you need some help. I pray you do." Now it wasn't for the sake of anything that he might be able to do for us, so much as for his kind way. It seemed as if he had known our Tiny Tim and felt with us.

MRS. CRATCHIT. I'm sure that he's a good soul.

BOB. You would be surer of it, my dear, if you saw and spoke to him. I shouldn't be at all surprised, if he got Peter a situation.

MRS. CRATCHIT. Only hear that, Peter!

MARTHA. And then, Peter will be keeping company with someone and setting up for himself!

PETER. Get along with you!

BOB. It's just as likely as not, one of these days, though there's plenty of time for that, my dear. But however and whenever we part from one another, I am sure we shall none of us forget poor Tiny Tim—shall we?—or this first parting that was among us?

ALL CHILDREN. Never, Father, never!

BOB. And when we recollect how patient and mild he was, we shall not quarrel easily among ourselves, and forget poor Tiny Tim in doing it.

ALL CHILDREN. No, Father, never!

LITTLE BOB. I am very happy, I am. I am. I am very happy.

[BOB kisses his little son, as does MRS. CRATCHIT, as do the other children. The family is set now in one sculptural embrace. The lighting fades to a gentle pool of light, tight on them.]

SCROOGE. Specter, something informs me that our parting moment is at hand. I know it, but I know not how I know it.

[FUTURE points to the other side of the stage. Lights out on Cratchits. FUTURE moves slowly, gliding. SCROOGE follows. FUTURE points opposite. FUTURE leads SCROOGE to a wall and a tombstone. He points to the stone.]

Am I that man those ghoulish parasites⁸ so gloated over? *[Pauses]* Before I draw nearer to that stone to which you point, answer me one question. Are these the shadows of things that will be, or the shadows of things that MAY be, only?

[FUTURE points to the gravestone. MARLEY appears in light well U. He points to grave as well. Gravestone turns front and grows to ten feet high. Words upon it: EBENEZER SCROOGE. Much smoke billows now from the grave. Choral music here. SCROOGE stands looking up at gravestone. FUTURE does not at all reply in mortals' words, but

⁸ **ghoulish parasites** (gōōl' ish par' ə sīts): The man and women who stole and divided Scrooge's goods after he died.

points once more to the gravestone. The stone undulates and glows. Music plays, beckoning SCROOGE. SCROOGE reeling in terror]

Oh, no. Spirit! Oh, no, no!

[FUTURE's finger still pointing]

Spirit! Hear me! I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I would have been but for this intercourse. Why show me this, if I am past all hope?

[FUTURE considers SCROOGE's logic. His hand wavers.]

Oh, Good Spirit, I see by your wavering hand that your good nature intercedes for me and pities me. Assure me that I yet may change these shadows that you have shown me by an altered life!

[FUTURE's hand trembles; pointing has stopped.]

I will honor Christmas in my heart and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach. Oh, tell me that I may sponge away the writing that is upon this stone!

[SCROOGE makes a desperate stab at grabbing FUTURE's hand. He holds it firm for a moment, but FUTURE, stronger than SCROOGE, pulls away. SCROOGE is on his knees, praying.]

Spirit, dear Spirit, I am praying before you. Give me a sign that all is possible. Give me a sign that all hope for me is not lost. Oh, Spirit, kind Spirit, I beseech thee: give me a sign . . .

[FUTURE deliquesces, slowly, gently. The PHANTOM's hood and robe drop gracefully to

the ground in a small heap. Music in. There is nothing in them. They are mortal cloth. The Spirit is elsewhere. SCROOGE has his sign. SCROOGE is alone. Tableau. The lights fade to black.]

Scene 5

[The end of it. MARLEY, spotlighted, opposite SCROOGE, in his bed, spotlighted. MARLEY speaks to audience, directly.]

MARLEY. [He smiles at SCROOGE.] The firm of Scrooge and Marley is doubly blessed: two misers turned: one, alas, in Death, too late; but the other miser turned in Time's penultimate nick.⁹ Look you on my friend, Ebenezer Scrooge . . .

SCROOGE. [Scrambling out of bed; reeling in delight] I will live in the Past, in the Present, and in the Future! The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me!

MARLEY. [He points and moves closer to SCROOGE's bed.] Yes, Ebenezer, the bedpost is your own. Believe it! Yes, Ebenezer, the room is your own. Believe it!

SCROOGE. Oh, Jacob Marley! Wherever you are, Jacob, know ye that I praise you for this! I praise you . . . and heaven . . . and Christmastime! [Kneels facing away from MARLEY] I say it to ye on my knees, old Jacob, on my knees! [He touches his bed curtains.] Not torn down. My bed curtains are not at all torn down! Rings and all, here they are! They are here: I am here: the shadows of things that would have been, may now be dispelled. They will be, Jacob! I know they will be! [He chooses clothing for the day. He tries different pieces of clothing and settles,

⁹ in Time's penultimate nick: Just at the last moment.

perhaps, on a dress suit, plus a cape of the bed clothing: something of color.] I am light as a feather, I am happy as an angel, I am as merry as a schoolboy. *[Yells out window and then out to audience]* Merry Christmas to everybody! Merry Christmas to everybody! A Happy New Year to all the world! Hallo

here! Whoop! Whoop! Hallo! Hallo! I don't know what day of the month it is! I don't care! I don't know anything! I'm quite a baby! I don't care! I don't care a fig! I'd much rather be a baby than be an old wreck like me or Marley! *(Sorry, Jacob, wherever ye be!)* Hallo! Hallo there!

[Church bells chime in Christmas Day. A small boy, named ADAM, is seen now D.R., as a light fades up on him.]

Hey, you boy! What's today? What day of the year is it?

ADAM. Today, sir? Why, it's Christmas Day!

SCROOGE. It's Christmas Day, is it? Whoop! Well, I haven't missed it after all, have I? The Spirits did all they did in one night. They can do anything they like, right? Of course they can! Of course they can!

ADAM. Excuse me, sir?

SCROOGE. Huh? Oh, yes, of course, what's your name, lad?

[SCROOGE and ADAM will play their scene from their own spotlights.]

ADAM. Adam, sir.

SCROOGE. Adam! What a fine, strong name! Do you know the poulterer's¹⁰ in the next street but one, at the corner?

ADAM. I certainly should hope I know him, sir!

SCROOGE. A remarkable boy! An intelligent boy! Do you know whether the poulterer's have sold the prize turkey that was hanging up there? I don't mean the little prize turkey, Adam, I mean the big one!

ADAM. What, do you mean the one they've got that's as big as me?

SCROOGE. I mean, the turkey the size of Adam: that's the bird!

ADAM. It's hanging there now, sir.

SCROOGE. It is? Go and buy it! No, no, I am absolutely in earnest. Go and buy it and tell 'em to bring it here, so that I may give them

the directions to where I want it delivered, as a gift. Come back here with the man, Adam, and I'll give you a shilling. Come back here with him in less than five minutes, and I'll give you half-a-crown!

ADAM. Oh, my sir! Don't let my brother in on this.

[ADAM runs offstage. MARLEY smiles.]

MARLEY. An act of kindness is like the first green grape of summer: one leads to another and another and another. It would take a queer man indeed to not follow an act of kindness with an act of kindness. One simply whets the tongue for more . . . the taste of kindness is too too sweet. Gifts—goods—are lifeless. But the gift of goodness one feels in the giving is full of life. It . . . is . . . a . . . wonder.

[Pauses; moves closer to SCROOGE, who is totally occupied with his dressing and arranging of his room and his day. He is making lists, etc. MARLEY reaches out to SCROOGE.]

ADAM. *[Calling, off]* I'm here! I'm here!

[ADAM runs on with a man, who carries an enormous turkey.]

Here I am, sir. Three minutes flat! A world record! I've got the poultryman and he's got the poultry! *[He pants, out of breath.]* I have earned my prize, sir, if I live . . .

[He holds his heart, playacting. SCROOGE goes to him and embraces him.]

SCROOGE. You are truly a champion, Adam . . .

MAN. Here's the bird you ordered, sir . . .

SCROOGE. Oh, my, MY!!! Look at the size of that turkey, will you! He never could have stood upon his legs, that bird! He would have snapped them off in a minute, like

sticks of sealingwax! Why you'll never be able to carry that bird to Camden-Town. I'll give you money for a cab . . .

MAN. Camden-Town's where it's goin', sir?

SCROOGE. Oh. I didn't tell you? Yes. I've written the precise address down just here on this . . . [*Hands paper to him*] Bob Cratchit's house. Now he's not to know who sends him this. Do you understand me? Not a word . . . [*Handing out money and chuckling*]

MAN. I understand, sir, not a word.

SCROOGE. Good. There you go then . . . this is for the turkey . . . [*Chuckle*] and this is for the taxi. [*Chuckle*] . . . and this is for your world-record run, Adam . . .

ADAM. But I don't have change for that, sir.

SCROOGE. Then keep it, my lad. It's Christmas!

ADAM. [*He kisses SCROOGE's cheek, quickly.*] Thank you, sir. Merry, Merry Christmas! [*He runs off.*]

MAN. And you've given me a bit overmuch here, too, sir . . .

SCROOGE. Of course I have, sir. It's Christmas!

MAN. Oh, well, thanking you, sir. I'll have this bird to Mr. Cratchit and his family in no time, sir. Don't you worry none about that. Merry Christmas to you, sir, and a very happy New Year, too . . .

[*The man exits. SCROOGE walks in a large circle about the stage, which is now gently lit. A chorus sings Christmas music far in the distance. Bells chime as well, far in the distance. A gentlewoman enters and passes. SCROOGE is on the streets now.*]

SCROOGE. Merry Christmas, madam . . .

WOMAN. Merry Christmas, sir . . .

[*The portly businessman from the first act enters.*]

SCROOGE. Merry Christmas, sir.

PORTLY MAN. Merry Christmas, sir.

SCROOGE. Oh, you! My dear sir! How do you do? I do hope that you succeeded yesterday! It was very kind of you. A Merry Christmas.

PORTLY MAN. Mr. Scrooge?

SCROOGE. Yes. Scrooge is my name though I'm afraid you may not find it very pleasant. Allow me to ask your pardon. And will you have the goodness to— [*He whispers into the man's ear.*]

PORTLY MAN. Lord bless me! My dear Mr. Scrooge, are you serious!?!

SCROOGE. If you please. Not a farthing¹¹ less. A great many back payments are included in it. I assure you. Will you do me that favor?

PORTLY MAN. My dear sir, I don't know what to say to such munifi—

SCROOGE. [*Cutting him off*] Don't say anything, please. Come and see me. Will you?

PORTLY MAN. I will! I will! Oh I will. Mr. Scrooge! It will be my pleasure!

SCROOGE. Thank'ee, I am much obliged to you. I thank you fifty times. Bless you!

[*Portly man passes offstage, perhaps by moving backwards. SCROOGE now comes to the room of his NEPHEW and NIECE. He stops at the door, begins to knock on it, loses his courage, tries again, loses his courage again, tries again, fails again, and then backs off and runs at the door, causing a tremendous bump against it. The NEPHEW*

11. **farthing** (fär' thig) n.: A small British coin.

and NIECE are startled. SCROOGE, poking head into room]

Fred!

NEPHEW. Why, bless my soul! Who's that?

NEPHEW and NIECE. [Together] How now? Who goes?

SCROOGE. It's I. Your Uncle Scrooge.

NIECE. Dear heart alive!

SCROOGE. I have come to dinner. May I come in. Fred?

NEPHEW. May you come in????!!! With such pleasure for me you may, Uncle!!! What a treat!

NIECE. What a treat, Uncle Scrooge! Come in, come in!

[They embrace a shocked and delighted SCROOGE. FRED calls into the other room.]

NEPHEW. Come in here, everybody, and meet my Uncle Scrooge! He's come for our Christmas party!

[Music in. Lighting here indicates that day has gone to night and gone to day again. It is early, early morning. SCROOGE walks alone from the party, exhausted, to his offices, opposite side of the stage. He opens his offices. The offices are as they were at the start of the play. SCROOGE seats himself with his door wide open so that he can see into the tank, as he awaits. CRATCHIT, who enters, head down, full of guilt. CRATCHIT starts writing almost before he sits.]

SCROOGE. What do you mean by coming in here at this time of day, a full eighteen minutes late, Mr. Cratchit? Hallo, sir? Do you hear me?

BOB. I am very sorry, sir. I am behind my time.

SCROOGE. You are? Yes, I certainly think you are. Step this way, sir, if you please . . .

BOB. It's only but once a year, sir . . . it shall not be repeated. I was making rather merry yesterday and into the night . . .

SCROOGE. Now, I'll tell you what, Cratchit. I am not going to stand this sort of thing any longer. And therefore . . .

[He stands and pokes his finger into BOB's chest.]

I am . . . about . . . to . . . raise . . . your salary.

BOB. Oh, no, sir, I . . . [Realizes] what did you say, sir?

SCROOGE. A Merry Christmas, Bob . . . [He claps BOB's back.] A merrier Christmas, Bob, my good fellow! than I have given you for many a year. I'll raise your salary and endeavor to assist your struggling family and we will discuss your affairs this very afternoon over a bowl of smoking bishop.¹² Bob! Make up the fires and buy another coal scuttle before you dot another i, Bob. It's too cold in this place! We need warmth and cheer, Bob Cratchit! Do you hear me? DO . . . YOU . . . HEAR . . . ME?

[BOB CRATCHIT stands, smiles at SCROOGE. BOB CRATCHIT faints. Blackout. As the main lights black out, a spotlight appears on SCROOGE. C. Another on MARLEY. He talks directly to the audience.]

MARLEY. Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all and infinitely more; and to Tiny Tim, who did NOT die, he was a second father. He became as good a friend, as good a master, as good a man, as the good old city

knew, or any other good old city, town, or borough in the good old world. And it was always said of him that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. [Pauses] May that be truly said of us, and all of us. And so, as Tiny Tim observed . . .

TINY TIM. [Atop SCROOGE's shoulder] God Bless Us, Every One . . .

[Lights up on chorus, singing final Christmas Song. SCROOGE and MARLEY and all spirits and other characters of the play join in. When the song is over, the lights fade to black.]

THINKING ABOUT THE SELECTION

Recalling

1. What fate does the Ghost of Christmas Present foretell for Tiny Tim?
2. What does Scrooge ask of the Ghost of Christmas Present while observing Fred and his wife?
3. What promise does Scrooge make to the Ghost of Christmas Present at the end of Scene 4?
4. What four sights does the Ghost of Christmas Future show Scrooge?
5. How does Scrooge live up to his promise in the final scene?

Interpreting

6. Compare and contrast the attitudes of Cratchit and his wife toward Scrooge when they toast him.
7. What does this difference in attitudes indicate about each of these characters?
8. What does Scrooge mean when he says, "I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future"?
9. The name Scrooge has come to stand for anyone who is miserly and heartless. Explain why the name as it is usually used would not fit Scrooge as he is at the end of the play.

Applying

10. Charles Dickens lived in the nineteenth century. Do you think the message of his play applies to our world today?

ANALYZING LITERATURE

Connecting Character and Theme

Theme is the central idea or insight about life revealed in a work of literature. Because the character of Scrooge is of central importance to the play, understanding why he changes will help you understand the theme.

1. Find three places in Act II where Scrooge's reactions show him changing for the better.
2. In general, why does Scrooge change for the better over the course of Act II?
3. Using your answer to the preceding question, write a brief statement of the theme.

CRITICAL THINKING AND READING

Supporting an Opinion of a Character

Although an opinion cannot be proven true or false, a sound opinion is one that is supported by facts or details. For instance, to support an opinion that Scrooge is willing to change, you could mention his statement to the Ghost of Christmas Present (early in Act II) "Tonight, if you have aught to teach me, let me profit by it."

1. In Act II, Scene 3, Scrooge observes the Cratchits at home. What does Scrooge say that could support the opinion that he is developing feelings of kindness or compassion?
2. Write a one-sentence description of Scrooge as he is at the end of the play. Support your statement with two details from the final scene.

THINKING AND WRITING

Writing a Review of a Play

A review of a play does two things. First, it gives the reader a clear idea of what the play is about. Second, it tells why the reviewer liked or did not like the play. Write a review of *A Christmas Carol: Scrooge and Marley*. To prepare for the writing, first list those details of the story you will use to give students who will read the play next an idea of what it is about. Then jot down your thoughts on why you liked or did not like the play. When you revise your first draft, make sure that your review would be fair and useful to someone who was considering whether or not to read the play.